

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

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By L. L. Higgason.

"MERRY CHRISTMAS."

How Christmas Came to Last Camp.

BY A. E. SWOYER.

ON December 22 lowering clouds drew in like a hostile army mustering for battle and smothering the mountain tops in a huge gray blanket. Then snow began to fall—at first in large, hesitating flakes which seemed half undecided as to whether to come to earth at all, and then in a steady, blinding sheet that shut out the sky and soon sheathed the earth in white.

All that night and all the following day it snowed, so that the morning of the 24th dawned upon a changed world, over which the hurrying wind blew the snow in fickle gusts and whirls which vanished only to appear again in some new spot.

The dazzling drifts were piled high above the window ledges of the little cabin in the mountains, and it was only after a morning's hard shoveling that Bob Brownscombe was

able to clear the door to free the windows so that the light could penetrate. This done, he swung his shovel lustily about the huge white mound that had once been the wood pile; uncovering it at last, he picked up a good arm-load of the wood and made his way back to the door.

Depositing his burden at the sill, he carefully kicked the snow from his shoes and brushed it from his rough garments; then, gently opening the door, he tiptoed in with his load and quietly piled it in the wood box. As he arose, he saw that sharp eyes had been watching him, and turned toward the bed where his mother lay.

"Why, mother!" he chided merrily. "I thought I told you to take a nap—and here you are as wide awake as can be and watching me!"

"I tried to sleep, really, Bob!" smiled the invalid; then her face clouded over. "But I just can't help worrying about your father—

he started out on his route before this storm, and now I am afraid that he is snowed in and helpless somewhere along the trail."

Bob turned away to hide the expression of worry that he could not keep out of his own face.

"That's foolish, mother. Dad's been carrying the mail for more than one season, and we've never yet seen the snow that stopped him!"

"Yes, I know," sighed Mrs. Brownscombe. "But there has to be a first time to everything, and this time he wasn't expecting bad weather."

"Nonsense!" laughed Bob, putting on a cheerfulness which he was far from feeling. "Dad knows this country too well to go unprepared; why, I believe that he takes his snowshoes and extra blankets with him in the summer time."

Mrs. Brownscombe was not altogether reassured, as one less keen than Bob could

easily have discovered, so with one eye upon the bed he went whistling about his work.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, mother," he ventured, with his back carefully turned toward her. "I'll just get us a little bite to eat, and then I'll skip back along the trail and see if I can locate father and the dogs—he'll be glad to have me meet him, anyway, and I'll find out all the sooner what we are going to have for Christmas!"

"All right, Bob, if you think that you ought to go—but don't get lost in the snow yourself."

"Me get lost?" laughed the boy, recklessly, as he deftly spread the rough board table. "Haven't I lived in these mountains all my life, almost, and never been lost yet? Besides, I'll only go down the trail two or three miles—perhaps I'll meet him even before I get to Hinchmanns'. Come on now—eat this soup, and you'll feel better!"

With smiling obedience his mother allowed him to prop her up in bed and dutifully ate the meal offered to her; then, with a smile of pride, she turned toward her stalwart son.

"Go on then, Bob, while the light is still good; let the dishes go until you come back. And—be careful," she added warningly.

With a cheerful good-by on his lips Bob was halfway through the door before his mother had finished speaking, and a moment later his snowshoes were making their swift, queer tracks across the expanse of white. The trail as far as Hinchmanns', their nearest neighbors, involved little difficulty, and within half an hour Bob came in sight of their cabin. As he unconsciously lengthened his stride to reach this place where he might possibly obtain news of his father, or at least find some one whom he could tell his secret worry over the probability of the elder Brownscombe's being lost in the snow, he saw Mr. Hinchmann leave the house and stand gazing earnestly toward him.

Breaking into his fastest pace, he hailed the house with a request for news; but, although the man shouted some reply, he failed to understand it and repeated his question as soon as he could get his breath.

"Now, don't worry, Bob," said Hinchmann, quietly. "Everything is all right; your father is safe, and inside the house."

With a shout of joy Bob kicked off his snowshoes, but before he could enter the man put a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"Not too fast, Bob,—your father is here, but I don't think he can see you just now. He's quite badly hurt, and although we can bring him around all right, he mustn't be excited."

Bob's face whitened and he drew back a pace. "Hurt!" he cried dazedly.

"Yes; he must have been deceived on the snow-covered trail, slipped, and broke his leg—he hasn't been able to tell us yet how it happened. But he managed to strap himself to the sled and the dogs brought him here safely, although he was unconscious from pain and exposure."

Shocked as he was by the news of his father's injury, the news that he was not so seriously hurt as he had dreaded acted as a tonic. The blood came back to his face, and with an effort he was able to gain command of himself.

"What have you done?" he asked more calmly.

"Everything that we could do. We have put on cold applications to reduce the inflammation, and as soon as that is done we will have to set the leg. He is resting quietly now, but of course he can't be moved."

"What about the mail?"

"Safe—tied to the sled with him. There's nothing left to deliver, of course, but the sack for Last Camp; their Christmas will be a little late, I'm afraid."

Bob dug the toe of his snowshoe into the crust, his brain in a turmoil, and for a moment his worry over his father's injury was forgotten. He knew that it had been his father's boast for years that he had never lost a sack of mail and never failed to make delivery on time—and that his first question when he awoke would not be as to how badly he was hurt, but whether the mail for Last Camp had been delivered. On the other hand; there was no one to take it but himself, and if he undertook the task he would have to leave both his injured father and invalid mother to such care as the Hinchmanns could provide. Nevertheless his resolve was soon taken, and with a grim smile he turned to the older man.

"Mr. Hinchmann," he said earnestly, "could you take care of father overnight, and send either Mrs. Hinchmann or Alice over to our house to take care of mother?"

"Why, of course, Bob, we expect to keep your father until he is able to be moved; but I don't see how you're going to get a woman over to your place. I'm afraid you'll have to keep your mother company."

"I can't—I've got to take the mail to Last Camp!" announced Bob, firmly.

Hinchmann whistled, then shrugged his shoulders.

"You can't do it, Bob," he objected. "That's a man's job. It's ten miles to the Camp, and the worst trail in the mountains; what it is now, under six feet of snow, you can imagine."

"I've got to do it!" said Bob, quietly. "It would break father's heart to think that their mail did not reach them on time; besides, if it isn't delivered he may lose his contract, and"—Bob looked the man bravely in the eyes, although his cheeks flushed a little—"that's all that we have now, for mother's sickness has taken all father had put by."

Hinchmann looked at Bob in silence for a moment, although his eyes showed his appreciation for the boy's bravery. But he shook his head slowly; the boy was barely fifteen years old, and the task that he had set for himself was a tremendous one.

"I know you well enough to be sure that you'll go if you say you will!" he grinned. "And, bless me, I believe you'll make it, too! But how can you manage about your mother?"

"If you will let me, I'll take Mrs. Hinchmann over on father's sled, if the dogs have rested enough. The trail hasn't drifted at all, and I've broken a path coming over."

"Well—all right. But I don't like the idea of your going. It seems as if I should be the one."

Bob, his point won, grinned happily.

"No; you're doing your share if you take care of the family and lend me Mrs. Hinchmann! So, if you are willing, I'll start right back with her; it is moonlight to-night, and I will be able to get there and back before morning; if I wait, it may drift and make it next to impossible to get through."

Mr. Hinchmann shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"I'm letting you run everything, Bob, so what you say goes—although I do think you'd be more sensible to wait for morning. If you are determined, though, I'll have Mrs. Hinchmann ready in five minutes."

He was as good as his word, and by quick work Bob managed to get the dogs into their rude harness and the sled ready by the time that Mrs. Hinchmann appeared. Half an hour later the two were at Brownscombe cabin and were getting ready for Bob's departure.

Mrs. Brownscombe, after a first gasp of terror when she learned that her husband was hurt and that Bob was going to attempt the mountain trail, said nothing of her fears; she was a true daughter of the hills and realized that when a thing must be done the best plan was not to grumble about it but to lend her help, even if that could consist merely in not throwing obstacles in the way of success. So, with white face, she willingly bore her share of the burden, even when Bob, cramming a few biscuits into his pockets, kissed her good-by and set out into the night.

Although the first half-mile of the trail was fairly easy going, as he began to climb the hills which separated him from Last Camp Bob began for the first time to fully realize the difficulty of the task before him; the mail, although but a single sack, already hung heavily upon his shoulders, and the snow, melted by the hot sun of the afternoon, gummed his snowshoes and made each foot a burden. Nevertheless, he gritted his teeth and kept on.

Soon the going became easier; the cool of evening froze the surface of the snow into a crust strong enough to sustain his snowshoes, and he got his "second wind"; nevertheless it was midnight when he reached the summit of the pass. Then, gazing down into the valley below, he saw that the path was blocked; the wind had drifted the light snow until it was piled mountain-high over the treacherous trail which wound along the hillside, so that it would be impossible to follow; even could he be sure that he was stepping upon the path instead of some overhanging snow formation, any step might start a snowslide which would bury him in an instant.

There was but one thing to be done; and, his lips firmly set, Bob started off on a round-about path which would circle the town and bring him in back of it where it nestled close to the foothills. This path was miles longer than the straight cut through the valley, and he had no idea as to how he would descend to the town when he reached it; nevertheless it was his only chance.

Hour after hour he toiled, at one moment traveling easily and swiftly over the hard-packed snow of the summits, the next wallowing through the loose drifts of the hollows, which were so soft that even his snowshoes sank into them. The moon gradually paled, then sank into the gloom of the hills; the air chilled with the deadly cold so common just before dawn—and then a faint rose tint in the east showed that the sun was rising and that morning had come.

So, at last, chilled to the bone and almost exhausted, Bob reached the steep hillside at the foot of which Last Camp nestled; it seemed as if he could toss a pebble into the sleeping town. Yet to attempt to reach it seemed well-nigh hopeless, for to slide down that almost perpendicular slope was to start a snowslide. Still, thought Bob, a crust has formed which should be enough to hold back the masses of snow beneath; and, very gingerly, one foot at a time, he began a zigzag descent.

Ten yards he went without mishap; twenty yards; fifty yards; fifty—and then everything

(Continued on page 66.)

The Pink Dolly.

BY PONNIE A. NEDWILL.

GERALDINE, dressed in her warm blue coat, with her hands snugly tucked in her chinchilla muff, danced around the windy corner and skipped up Ninth Avenue beside her tall uncle Will. It was Christmas morning. The sky was blue and the air clear and fresh. Most of the little shops were closed, but nearly all had wreaths of holly or scarlet bells or some other token of Christmas in the windows. An express cart clattered by, piled high with packages, and a postman with both arms full whistled gaily as he passed from house to house.

"Oh, Uncle Will!" exclaimed Geraldine. "I just love New York on Christmas Day. I'm so glad I'm visiting you."

"Do you like it, Jerry?" said Uncle Will, winking and wrinkling up his eyes in the jolliest way. "Wait till I take you out in the automobile this afternoon and show you everything."

"I've had such fun already," laughed Geraldine. "That tree was just bee-autiful, and, oh, Uncle Will, look!" She caught his sleeve and dragged him over to the show window of a little shop.

It was a butter-and-eggs store, and at first glance Uncle Will saw nothing but fresh eggs and cheeses and big "best butter" signs. Then he found what had caught his little niece's attention.

In the center of the window a narrow box was propped up on end, and in it lay a doll dressed in the daintiest manner imaginable. Her frock was of thin white lawn sprinkled over with little pink rose-buds. A big lace hat ornamented with pink ribbon perched upon her long fair curls, and a crisp pink sash and pink shoes and stockings completed her costume. Her eyes were brown and shaded by long lashes of real hair.

Geraldine sighed. "Isn't she perfectly dear? Look at that hat!"

Uncle Will looked at the hat and saw at the same time a little ticket pinned to the top of the box, and on the ticket was printed in queer shaky letters:

"FOR SALE. Price, \$2.18."

"Do you really like her, Geraldine?" he asked.

"She's a darling!" gasped the little girl.

"Well, let's go in and buy her then," said Uncle Will.

"Buy her? O Uncle Will! For me?" stammered Geraldine.

"Yes, of course. You didn't get a single dolly this Christmas. Come in and see if you like her as well inside."

Without another word Uncle Will opened the little door, and Geraldine followed him into the shop. It was small and poor and smelt of cheese and butter, but it was very clean. A thin pale old man sat behind the counter reading a newspaper.

"Do you want to sell that doll in the window?" asked Uncle Will.

The old man laid down the newspaper and stood up peering over his spectacles. "The doll?— Oh, yes," he said at last. Then in a shrill, high voice he called, "Molly! Molly!"

There was the sound of footsteps at the rear of the shop, and a thin girl with beautiful fair hair came into sight.

"Yes, grandfather?" she answered.

"Some one to see your doll, Molly," said the old man, and, picking up his newspaper,



A Favorite Tree.

BY HARRIETTE WILBUR.

OH, I know a tree which all children admire,
From the base of its trunk to the top of its spire;
It sparkles and shines with its candles alight,
And glows from the window far into the night.
Now this popular tree is most loving and kind,
For hung on its branches such fruit you will find
As whistles and dollies and books and drums,
And oranges, apples, and sweetmeats and plums;—
But after the children spy out this fine tree,
It soon grows as empty as empty can be.

he shuffled slowly into the back of the shop.

The fair-haired girl came forward, smiling a little.

"Would you like to look at the doll?" she asked.

"Yes," said Uncle Will, "my little niece admired it so much that we came in to buy it."

A peculiar expression passed over the child's face, a look as if she were terribly disappointed and ready to cry, but she walked over to the show window, climbed up a small step, removed the doll, and brought it in her hands to them. As she laid the box on the counter the pink darling closed her long-lashed eyes.

Geraldine sighed deeply. "Isn't she lovely, Uncle Will?"

He took the doll out of the box and put her in Geraldine's arms.

"There, little mother, she's yours. Kiss your baby."

Then, thrusting his hand in his pocket and turning to the fair girl, he asked,—

"The price is two dollars and eighteen cents, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," she said quietly, looking at him with that same peculiar forlorn expression in her eyes.

Uncle Will hesitated. "Maybe you'd rather not sell her? Is she your own dolly?"

Molly suddenly grew red to the roots of her fair hair. "No, sir, she's not mine"—she

stammered, "I wanted to sell her—I—I dressed her myself"— She seemed more distressed than ever.

Uncle Will smiled down at the troubled face.

"Why, you don't mean to say a little girl like you made all those pretty clothes!" he said. "What do you say to that, Jerry? You couldn't do that, and I don't believe Molly is much older than you."

Molly's eyes lighted up. "I'm just eleven," she said.

"And I'll be eleven next July," confessed Geraldine. "But I never dressed a doll," she added.

"I made every bit of her clothes," said Molly, quickly. "I love to sew. And I made them just as pretty as I could because I wanted to be sure to sell her."

The enthusiasm died out of her voice, and once more Uncle Will noticed that queer, sad, little expression creep across her face. He was puzzled.

"I'm afraid two dollars and eighteen cents is not enough to pay for such a beautiful doll with such lovely clothes," he said. "I will give you three dollars for her." He held out three one-dollar bills.

"No, no, sir," cried Molly, shaking her head. "I need only two dollars and eighteen cents—it doesn't matter now—thank you, sir, but I don't want any more."

Then as he still held out the bills she took them and went over to the cash drawer, where she counted out eighty-two cents change.

"Please, sir," she insisted, "I couldn't take any more. It's no good, anyway." She seemed very near tears now, so Uncle Will put the change in his pocket, still feeling puzzled.

"She certainly is a beautiful dolly," he said. "I know my little niece loves her already."

"Oh, I do. Thank you so much, Uncle Will," cried Geraldine, beaming first at her uncle and then at the other girl. "Perhaps you'd like to kiss her good-by," she added, for now Geraldine, too, noticed the queer sad look on Molly's face.

"Oh, no," said the girl, indifferently, "I don't care," and she turned her back and began to clear away some empty egg boxes.

Uncle Will moved to the door rather slowly.

"Come, Jerry," he said, then, looking back on the fair-haired Molly as she bent over the counter, he called in his jolly way, "Merry Christmas, Molly! I hope you have a happy day. Merry Christmas!"

Some kind of a queer little sound came from Molly's bent figure, but she did not turn, and Uncle Will and Geraldine left the little shop in silence.

They walked half-a-block without saying a word, then, suddenly, Geraldine stood still and looked up at her uncle with troubled eyes.

"Uncle Will, I didn't ask that little girl what my dolly's name is. May I go back to ask her?"

Uncle Will looked down very seriously.

"If you want to, Jerry," he said. As they retraced their steps he added, "Jerry, I'm afraid Molly wasn't very happy. Maybe you can find out what is troubling her, so we can help her. You go in alone. I'll wait here."

Uncle Will held open the door and Geraldine walked rather trembly into the little shop. Beside a big butter-tub she paused, clasping the dolly closely. The sound of sobbing came to her ears. Molly was sitting

on a low stool behind the counter, her face in her hands, crying as if her heart would break.

Geraldine watched her with frightened eyes. Then she ran over and laid the pink dolly in her lap.

"Keep her, please keep her," she said. "I'd rather you'd have her, but only don't cry!"

Molly stopped sobbing and pushed the doll away. "Oh, I don't want her back. I'm not crying for her. I tried and tried to sell her all week. If I had sold her even yesterday, it would have been time enough. Now it's too late." She looked despairingly at Geraldine.

"What did you want to do with the money?" asked Geraldine.

"I was going to see my mother. I never had a Christmas before without her. And grandpa said if I could earn enough money to pay my fare one way he would give me enough to pay the other. And now I have the money and it's too late!" She did not cry again, but she looked so miserable that Geraldine felt like crying herself.

"Where is your mother?" she asked. "Doesn't she live here in New York?"

"She always did," said Molly, "but she has been dreadfully ill and the doctor sent her to a sanitarium in the country. She's getting better very slowly, and I haven't seen her since last August. Grandpa is very good, but business has been so bad this year he couldn't afford to give me money for the carfare. I was sure I could earn it, so I wrote her I would go to visit her Christmas Day. I saved a dollar and bought the doll with that and then I dressed her and put her in the window, but nobody came to buy her till you did, and now it's too late."

"But I don't see," said Geraldine, hopefully, "why you don't go now. It's only about eleven o'clock."

"That's just it," said Molly, bitterly, "there's only one morning train and it leaves at ten minutes of eleven. It's gone now. And mother will be so disappointed!" She began to cry softly again.

"Oh dear," said Geraldine, "I never heard anything so awful. I'm going to tell Uncle Will."

She ran over to the door and dragged Uncle Will in by his big shaggy coat-sleeve.

"O Uncle," she began breathlessly, "poor Molly wants to go to see her mother and she's far away and the train leaves at ten minutes before eleven—and it's too late now—and she wanted the money for that—and she's crying and crying"—

"Wait, wait a minute," interrupted Uncle Will, "perhaps I can straighten things a bit. Where is your mother, child?" he asked kindly, bending over Molly.

"She is at the Midland Sanitarium, sir, at Mountain Heights, New York," said Molly, raising her tear-stained face.

"Oh, yes, I know," nodded Uncle Will. "Sullivan County—small place—only two trains a day?"

"Yes, sir," said Molly.

"What time does the afternoon train leave?" asked Uncle Will.

"About five," said Molly.

"The morning train is gone and the afternoon train is too late. Still you have to go." Uncle Will began to smile and Molly looked up startled, then smiled a little too, with sudden hope.

"Listen, Molly," said Uncle Will. "I have an automobile that needs exercise this afternoon, and if you and grandpa can be

ready at—let me see"—he looked at his watch—"half-past twelve, you and I and grandpa and Geraldine can spin up to Mountain Heights at thirty miles an hour, call on mother, stay to tea, and arrive home here by bedtime. What do you say?"

But Molly could hardly speak.

"Oh, sir!" she stammered. "If I could—if grandpa—if—if—"

"If what?" laughed Uncle Will.

"I was thinking of grandma," faltered Molly. "I don't think we could leave her."

"Grandma!" cried Uncle Will. "Why, of course, we'll take grandma too. I didn't know about her, that's all. Run, child, and ask them both. Hurry, hurry!" for Molly stopped, trying to murmur a thank you.

She was back in a moment, her face beaming.

"Oh, sir, they are very grateful. Grandma says it's too much. She's coming to thank you!"

"No, no," cried Uncle Will, fleeing to the door. "No time now. Come, Jerry. At twelve-thirty we'll be back. Bundle up warm, all of you. By-by."

And Uncle Will was as good as his word. Promptly at half-past twelve a big red automobile drew up before the little butter-and-cheese shop and Uncle Will tucked in Molly between grandpa and grandma on the back seat. A moment later, after he and Geraldine and the pink dolly were safely packed inside, away they whizzed through the long bright Christmas afternoon to the far-away mother watching for her little girl.

So the pink dolly brought a Merry Christmas to Molly after all.

The Christmas Story.

VALLEY and hill lie white and still
Under the winter snow.
Oh, tell us the Christmas story,
The tale of long ago!
How stars looked down on Bethlehem's town,
But no one spoke his name,
Or knew the gift of heaven to earth
When that first Christmas came.

Now carols sound the whole world round,
And bells ring clear and sweet,
While lighted tree and holly wreath
The blessed season greet.
Hearts swell with joy and homes grow bright
As we praise his dear name,
Who brought the joy of heaven to earth
When that first Christmas came.

KATE W. HAMILTON,
in Firelight.

A Christmas Accident.

BY EULETA WADSWORTH.

THE big dappled-gray rocking-horse stood on a table in the toy shop, looking very dejected. It was late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve and, though hundreds of toys all around him had been sold and gone away to make some boy or girl happy on the morrow, he was left, perhaps to wait in that tiresome shop another year.

"This comes," he complained to the stuffed white cat sitting at his feet, "of being an expensive toy. You either don't get sold at all or you go to a child who has so many other toys he doesn't care much about you. I wish I could go to a little cripple or a poor boy who wouldn't have another toy. My! wouldn't I make him happy?"

"To a boy? Excuse me," said the cat.

"I wouldn't want to belong to a boy. Why, he'd pull your tail out by the roots and kick you in the ribs."

"Oh, no, not the right kind of a boy. No kind-hearted manly fellow would do such a thing. It's only cowards and boys without a bit of real man in them who treat animals that way."

"I hope you are right," sighed the cat.

The horse raised his head and looked outside. Already the streets were getting dull, night was coming on very fast.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the horse. "My last hope is about gone."

But just then the door of the shop swung open and a short, heavy-set man hustled up to the counter.

"I want a large, handsome rocking-horse for a boy of six."

The dapple-gray's heart began to beat fast. He felt as if he would like to prance.

"This is a fine one," said the shopkeeper, taking Dapple off the table and rolling him along the aisle. "You may have him for fifteen dollars."

"All right," said the man, who seemed to be in a hurry.

Dapple switched his tail for joy. And the shopkeeper rolled him out to the sidewalk and lifted him into the tonneau of a big automobile. It was too dark in there to see, but Dapple's hopes fell when he realized the size and horse-power of the car. It did not look as if he were on his way to gladden the heart of a poor boy. Pretty soon something clawed him sharply on the leg.

"Excuse me," said an enormous Teddy bear, "in turning that corner I lost my balance."

"Certainly," said the horse, snorting with excitement and shrinking back into his corner, for horses are afraid of even the smell of bears.

Just then some one kicked him furiously in the ribs.

"I'm sorry," apologized a long-haired goat, "but my head is buried down here under a great Noah's Ark, and I've just got to get out."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the horse, in disgust, "are we all going to the same boy?"

"Of course we are," bleated a woolly sheep from a dark corner.

"I don't believe any of us will get there," said a beautiful timid poodle with a blue ribbon around his neck, "unless some one will kindly close this tonneau door. I'm terribly afraid we'll all spill out turning corners. But I'm so wedged in between a big red drum and a writing-desk that I can't move."

"I will close it," volunteered the gallant horse, though his heart was heavy with disappointment. He had always wanted so much to bring real joy to a small boy's heart, and he well knew that this boy toward whom he was speeding would have too many presents to care specially for him.

"My! what a shame!" he mumbled as he tried to make his way to the open door, "when there are ever and ever so many boys in this city who won't have a single present to-morrow."

Just as he reached the door and put out one hoof to pull it to, the automobile made a sharp turn around a corner, and the next instant he was lying on the street pavement with a leg broken off.

The machine stopped. The heavy-set man got out of the front seat. "Something fell out, Henry," he said to the driver. "The tonneau door must have come unlatched."

"Yes, sir," said Henry, jumping out; "here it is, the rocking-horse, sir." He set Dapple up, then stooped to pick up his leg which could be seen quite plainly under the street lamp. "His leg is broken off, sir."

"Oh, pshaw!" said the man. "Then he's no good to me. Kenneth wouldn't care for him broken."

Dapple had noticed a woman and a boy who had come up while they were talking and who stood waiting for the car to move on out of the way of their crossing. The woman was stooped and very tired-looking, and the thin-faced little boy was gazing at Dapple with such longing that it made the tears come in the horse's eyes.

"Some kid would be glad to get him," suggested the driver, looking at the woman and boy standing on the curb.

"Yes, if one knew where to find one," replied the man.

"Maybe the one standing there would like to take him home," said the driver, who noticed the hungry look in the boy's blue eyes.

Dapple threw up his head to listen to every word and tried to show his approval of the driver's suggestion by switching his handsome white tail. The driver went over and spoke to the woman. Dapple couldn't hear what he said, but he could see the wonderful light that sprang into the boy's eyes and the eager imploring look he gave his mother. The woman's voice reached him quite clearly.

"That's very kind of you," she said, and Dapple saw that her eyes quite suddenly filled with tears. "Jimmy will like it even if it is broken. He won't have any other toy."

Dapple pranced on three legs joyfully. The machine drove on. The thin-faced little boy threw his arms around Dapple's neck.

"O mother," he cried, "is he really mine?" And as he proudly rolled Dapple along the sidewalk, he kept patting his mane with soft loving hands and smiling happily up into his mother's face.

Dapple wanted to kick his heels up and nicker, but he was afraid he would frighten his new master; so he pranced along, saying to himself:

"This is a funny old world. Why, even getting your leg broken is sometimes good luck."

For the Quiet Hour.

A Christmas Service.

(COMPILED BY REV. ELEANOR E. GORDON.)

Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee.

Acts iii. 6.

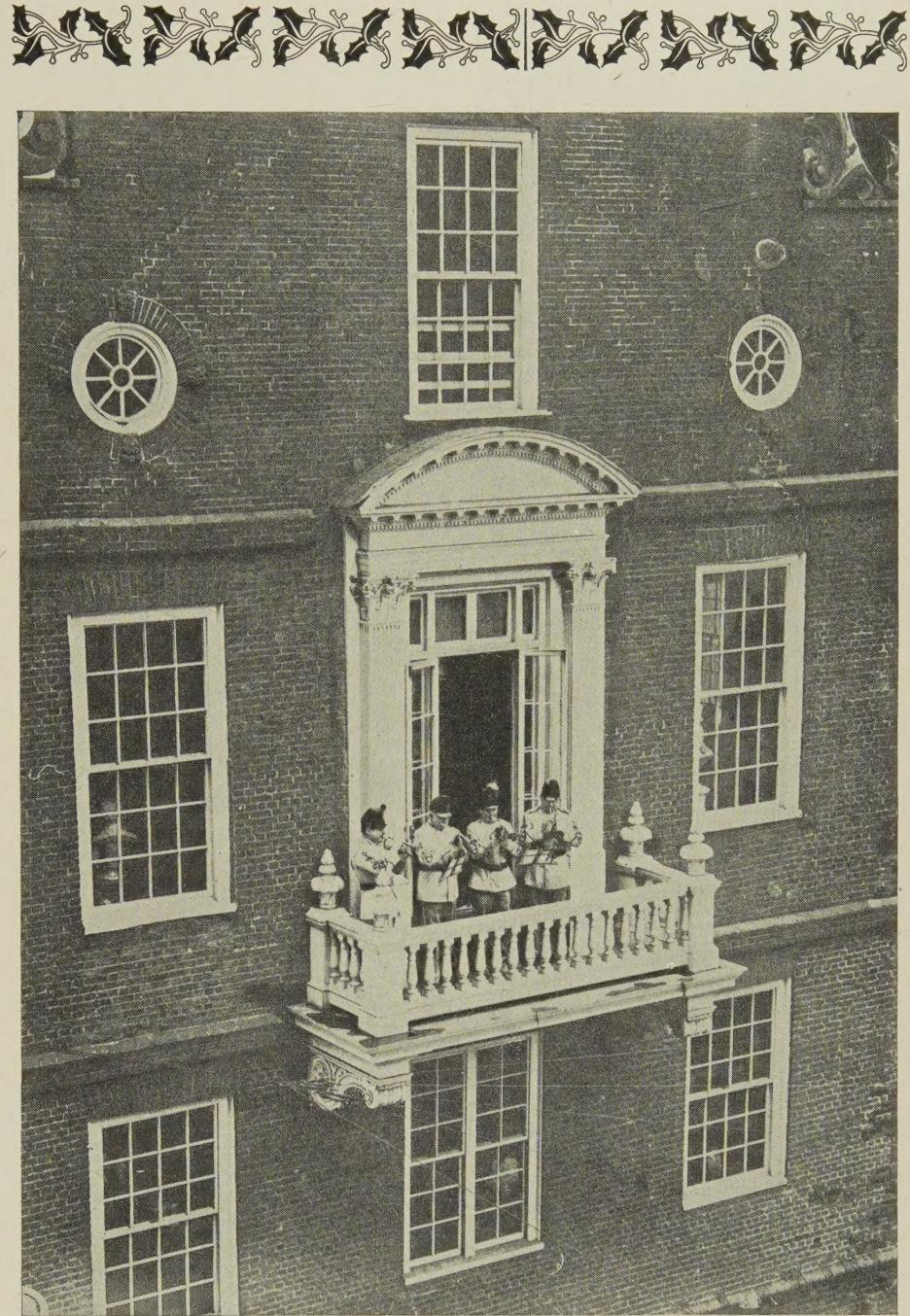
Love that asketh love again
Finds the barter naught but pain;
Love that giveth in full store,
Aye receives as much and more.

Love exacting nothing back,
Never knoweth any lack;
Love compelling love to pay,
Sees him bankrupt every day.

DINAH MULOCK CRAIK

Prayer.

"God bless us, every one."



Boston Photo News Co.

BUGLERS PLAYING CAROLS ON BALCONY OF OLD STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.

It Came upon the Midnight Clear.

IT came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good-will to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel-sounds
The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring:
Oh! hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When Peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

EDMUND H. SEARS.

The Christmas Tree's Gift.

BY THE EDITOR.

[The incident embodied in this story, and the photograph to illustrate it, were contributed by Jennie A. Kirk, Jamaica Plain, Mass.]

ONCE upon a time, when Spring was abroad in the land, a tiny point of green pushed itself up through the earth toward the sky.

Straight and strong it grew, on a hillside close to a rushing brook.

Laurel, with its shining leaves and pink blossoms, was standing near, with blackberry and blueberry bushes, and many kinds of ferns.

A pretty home for a baby plant, wasn't it? Higher the little shoot climbed, and stronger it became, until one could see that it was a baby tree. Then, one day in December, when it was a few years old, something happened! John and Sarita, with some friends, were walking on the hillside looking for Christmas greens for their homes and Sunday school.

Sarita saw it first, and called to the others, "Oh, see the little tree!"

"Just the thing!" they cried, "for it will last, and we can have it first in school, then in Sunday school for Christmas, then in school again as long as it will keep fresh and green."

"Who will get there first and dig it up?" said Charlie.

"I will!" Fannie shouted.

"No, let Sarita, she saw it first," suggested John.

Sarita needed help in digging, and decided that the fairest way to find her helper was by "counting out." Fred was happy when the lot fell to him.

So Fred and Sarita began the task while the others looked on. They were very careful not to cut the roots as they dug down and down to get them all, and they kept a good mass of earth around them.

The others helped in turn, for they all wanted a share in the tree. At last it was out and laid in the small express wagon. No lack of volunteer horses to draw the load! Off they started with their prize for Sarita's home. Mother found just the right pot for the tree and showed them how to plant it. It was very small, but how happy and pretty it looked!

"Let us put on the ornaments and make a real Christmas tree of it," said Doris; "what a beauty it will be!"

Very proudly the little tree held the sparkling things that were hung upon it. Its green leaves, slender as needles, showed between the tinsel trinkets, and added their own gift of beauty. "I had thought to grow up and bear cones," whispered the tree to itself, "and to spread my branches wide for shade. Perhaps—perhaps I am doing something worth while if I am just making every one glad!" And when the children sang their Christmas carols and looked so happy, it was well content.

More proudly did the little tree carry the load given it at the service of the Sunday



school. For it was taken to the chapel, and there played its part in the festival of goodwill. A letter from the school to its minister was hung in its branches, telling of love and gratitude expressed in a gift the children had provided. A great hamper of toys and food for a mission school in the city, gifts brought by the children themselves, was set close to its foot. "Every one is giving!" thought the little tree. "What have I to give?"

Many times it asked itself the question in the days that followed. It was taken back to the school-room and all its ornaments put away. There it stood in the window, just a little green tree once more.

"May we keep it always, Miss Brewster?" asked Sarita.

"I think not," answered the teacher. "Evergreens need a colder atmosphere than our school-room offers, and do not thrive indoors. But we will water it every day, and keep it as long as it stays green."

The little tree knew then that it had not long to live, and it wanted more than ever to make a gift to the children. The spirit of Christmas had quite taken possession of it, and did not vanish even when Christmas was past.

Soon a great hope came into the heart of the tree. It remembered the treasures it had helped to stow away in the ground in the summer. It thought of a visit a bird had made to its branches with a strawberry in its beak, and how when he had eaten it he wiped his beak on the branch and a bit of the berry fell to the ground. "I may have something to give to the children after all," said the little tree.

At the end of a month the wonderful thing happened. At the close of school one Friday afternoon Miss Brewster said: "You know that we were expecting to part with our friendly tree to-day, but I think now that there is something we may keep for a while longer, to remember it by. Come and see."

What do you think the children saw?

They saw a number of small green leaves peeping up from the soil that was in the pot. Little roots of plants had nestled up to the foot of the tree; little seeds had fallen to the ground near its stem, and now, in the warm room, had begun to grow as if Spring had come.

"Oh! oh!" cried all the children.

"Hurrah for the tree!" shouted Fred.

"Let them grow! Let them grow!" John and Doris exclaimed together.

In the pause that followed Sarita spoke.

"How interesting!" she said. Then they all laughed, and Sarita joined in the merriment, for she had been trying for days to say that word right.

"I still think," said Miss Brewster, "that we must give up the tree itself. We will cut it down, and then see what we shall have when these plants in the pot have grown larger."

"Why!" said Sarita, "our little tree has made us a present! These plants are the Christmas tree's gift."

Then a little shiver of joy went all over the baby tree. It did not mind at all that it could never grow up to be a great tree. "I did my part. I took care of the seeds and plants that came to me for shelter," it said. "I had something to give." So it sang happily to itself as Max took his new saw and cut its trunk off close to the ground.

Now the next Christmas has come and the pot is quite filled with the plants which had sprung up from the soil in it. Clover is hanging like long vines over the edge, down to the floor. Violets make a mass of light

green leaves, and little seed-pods are found close to the earth, although no one has seen any flowers. There are several strawberry plants bearing clusters of blossoms and now and then a berry; while high above all the rest stand stalks of yarrow with their feathery leaves and white flowers. It has a place with the other Christmas decorations in the school-room where for a whole year the children have watched it with eager interest and much pleasure. It will go to the chapel where again the voice of prayer and praise will sound out the Christmas message; where last year the little tree found the joy of the Christmas season in its wish to give.

"I think," said Sarita, as the last note of "Silent Night" had died away, and the children were thinking again of the birthday which we celebrate at Christmas, "I think that the nicest part of our decorations this year is this pot of plants and flowers which our last year's Christmas tree gave to us."

How Christmas Came to Last Camp.

(Continued from page 62.)

around him seemed to slip and slide; there was a roar like that of Niagara, the air was filled with a powder of snow—and then something struck him on the head and he knew no more.

When he came to himself he found that he was in a rough cabin bed, while all about him bent a circle of smiling faces; it was an instant before his dazed faculties could realize that he had been saved from the slide, and was at his destination. But as the realization did come over him, his tired lips twisted into a smile.

"Merry Christmas!" said Bob, faintly.

A laugh—deep-throated and sympathetic—went around the circle, and a voice said gruffly, "Well, young feller, around at last, eh? We kind o' thought maybe you wouldn't ever come to!"

"Did you get the mail?" asked Bob, struggling to sit up.

"That we did—and you can thank the mail bag for saving your life too. When the slide came, it pretty near buried the Johnson cabin and routed us all out in a hurry, and while we were digging out the Johnsons somebody noticed the mail bag sticking out of the middle of the snow pile. We went to get it—and found you underneath."

"How did I get here?"

"Well, we packed you in on our backs same as you did the mail bag, son; couldn't let Santa Claus get away from us after he'd took all that trouble to bring Christmas to Last Camp, you know!"

Bob started to get out of bed, but firm hands pressed him back.

"I must get home!" protested Bob, struggling. "My mother's sick, and father's hurt—they'll be worrying about me!"

"Now you lie right down and go to sleep, son," commanded the leader of the party. "All that's been 'tended to. We realized maybe that you was a wee mite smaller than our regular postman—besides knowing pretty well who you was—and we thought maybe your dad'd be worrying. So two or three of the boys started back as soon as we found you was all right to tell your folks—an' to do a little Christmasin' of our own; you see, we've owed your dad a present for a right long time, an' things seemed about right to send it along now. So you go to sleep, an' to-morrow we'll send you home in style." And Bob, now that his anxiety was over, obeyed.



PAGE FOR LITTLE READERS



A Little Child's Preference.

BY BEULAH RECTOR.

I LIKE the apple tree,
It bears such round, red fruit,
It holds my swing;

I like the maple wide,
It is the dooryard's pride,
There robins nest in spring;

I like the lady birch
Whose branches droop
Low on the garden wall;

But when it's Christmas time
I think the long, soft-needled pine
Is quite the best of all.

My Happiest Christmas.

BY HERMOLION E. PERKINS.

I BELIEVE last Christmas was my very happiest Christmas: because, —well, I'll tell you why.

About two weeks before Christmas mother began to tell me that Santa Claus didn't like little girls that were lazy and told their mothers to "Wait a minute" when she asked them to do something. I'm ashamed to tell I didn't pay much attention, I suppose because I was bad and didn't think she would tell Santa, but *she did!*

When brother and I got up Christmas morning there were our stockings just like we left them, not one single present for either of us! I told brother it was because Santa Claus had so many little boys' and girls' houses to go to he was late getting to our house, so we must go back to bed and wait a while. But I was *scared!*

A long, long time afterwards we got up and went again, but they were still empty! I got *awful scared!*

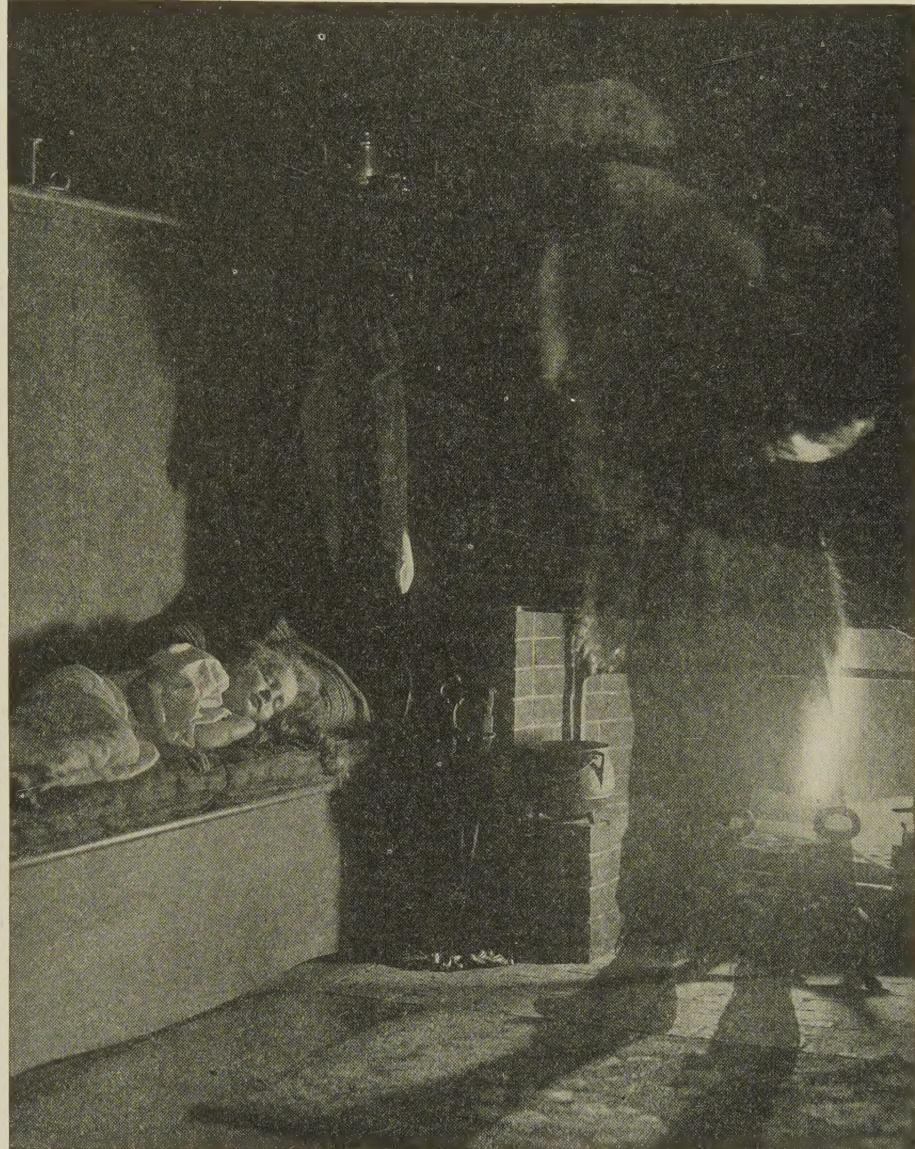
Brother cried and said if Santa couldn't bring him a whole new wagon, he thought he might bring some new wheels for the old one; and he cried so loud that mother came.

I was almost crying, too, because the sun was shining outside, and who ever heard of Santa coming in daylight?

Mother said maybe he wrote us a letter, and, sure 'nough, we found one in the mail box. It was printed so I could read, and he said he did not like little girls that were lazy and told their mothers to "Wait a minute"; and to punish me he had hidden my presents in *hard* places. He said brother's were in easy places because he was so little and good.

I tried not to cry; I was so awfully ashamed!

Behind a chair in mother's room,



By Katherine Bingham

A CHRISTMAS-EVE DREAM.

that had a sheet spread over it, we found brother's new wagon. His hobbyhorse was hid under the table. At first everything we found was brother's.

We heard the biggest noise in the dining room, and what do you think we found? 'Way up high, hanging to the chandelier, was a big paper bag, and it was jumping all 'round and 'round and something inside of it was going, "Wa-a-a-a-a-a! Wa-a-a-a!"

"It's a baby!" brother screamed. But I knew it was not a baby. Santa Claus hasn't any babies, God sends the babies. Can you guess what it was? It was a little white puppy! Just what brother had been praying for! I suppose God was out of puppies, so he told Santa Claus. He must have told him about my kitty too, because I found it in a little box in the pantry.

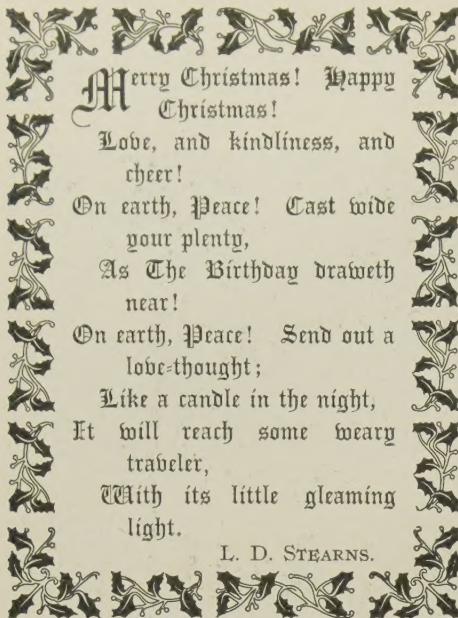
I had written Santa Claus and asked him to bring me a ring,—one with a set. And what do you think? When I went to get my play-hat to run over and show Mabel the kitty Santa brought, the ring was tied on the ribbon of my hat! Wasn't that a funny place to hide things?

In my coat pocket I found the dearest little locket and chain. And my furs were hidden in the china closet, and my doll was 'way back under the bed!

We found candy, fruit, and nuts in the funniest places!

This was my happiest Christmas because I thought I wasn't going to get anything at all, and I got everything I asked for, and more!

Santa Claus is awful good! (And I suppose he is nice to teach little girls not to be lazy too, because mother says I never have been since.)



The Christ Candle.

BY KATE LOUISE BROWN.

ONE winter evening four children were walking home from school together. It was after sunset and the Evening Star was sinking in the western skies. It was the dearest night of all the year; it was Christmas Eve!

Pierre, the miller's son, walked very fast, kicking the loose snow with his feet and talking loudly of all the grand things he was going to do.

Marcel, the rich farmer Renée's only child, kept by Pierre's side; Margot, the innkeeper's daughter, walked with him. A little behind was Louise, the child of a poor wood cutter, who lived in a lonely hut on a side path.

"You should see my candle," boasted Pierre. "It is almost a foot high and will burn all night. If the Christ Child passes our way, it will surely light his steps."

"Mine is not so large," said Marcel, "but it is of the best wax and will burn well. It is a clear, glowing red."

"Aunt Margot sent me mine from Paris," said the young Margot. "It is a lovely sky-blue and decorated with tiny golden stars. There was never such a candle seen about here."

"Have you, then, no candle, Louise?" asked Pierre, kindly, noting the silence of the little girl.

"My father said he would bring a candle home to me, if he was paid for his work to-night," replied the little Louise timidly.

"Let us hope he will," said Pierre. "It is to the honor of our village that no house shall be dark when our dear little Lord passes by."

Just then they reached the Inn, and Margot shouted "Good-night!" as she ran up the steps. A little beyond Pierre turned into the road that led to his father's farm-house.

Marcel kept along with Louise a few moments, then his bright window gleamed like an eye of welcome.

Little Louise was now alone, but she was not afraid. When the wayside cross was reached, she dropped on her knees for a moment. "Dear God," she prayed, "let father have his money to-night and I my candle. Do not let the darling Christ Child find it dark when he passes our cottage."

Not far beyond was the side path leading to her home. In a few moments she was

kissing mother and looking up eagerly into the face of her father.

"I was not paid, my darling," he began sadly. "The master had gone to the city and forgotten. There will be no Christmas goose for us, my Heart of Gold, only potatoes roasted in the ashes. But this is not all.

"As I turned to leave the room I stepped on something. It was this wee candle that had dropped from the bundle that was to light the tree for the housekeeper's children. I handed it back, but she said, 'No, take it home to your Louise, and here is a Christmas cake for her.' It is a shame the master should have forgotten—and on Christmas Eve."

"I asked God to send it," cried Louise, clapping her hands. "He never forgets to hear me."

After the supper was eaten the father took Louise on his lap and told her the stories of the Christmastide. Louise loved best of all the tale of the dear Christ Child who always came walking through the town in the hush of the midnight hour.

"He stops at each house and lifts his baby hand in blessing for every child who sleeps therein," went on the earnest voice. "When he sees the glow of the little candle, he knows that some child in love has set it there."

The prayers were said, the hymn sung. Then Louise lighted her Christmas candle and placed it in the window.

"Shine far—far, little light," she whispered. "Guide the darling Christ Child."

Very soon after this the little family was fast asleep.

Outside in the forest a poor woman was wandering. She held her baby wrapped in an old blanket, tightly clasped in her aching arms. She had been to the hospital to see her sick husband, and on the way back was overtaken by the night and the storm.

As the first flakes came down she walked faster and faster, but the path seemed strange. She had taken a wrong turning and lost her way.

The winter wind sang a wild song in the branches of the tall, black fir trees, then tore at her thin garments. The mother shivered but pushed on resolutely, holding her baby closer. The storm grew wilder until she could scarce trace her way through the white whirling of flakes.

"God help me!" she cried as a sleepiness stole over her. More than all else she wanted to lie down by the way and rest, but she knew that sleep would be the sleep of Death.

So she struggled on, and just as she felt she could take not even one step more, she saw before her a tiny point of light!

"Just a few steps more, dear God," she pleaded, and in a moment she fell against a house door and her baby gave one startled cry.

Louise was awakened by that cry and ran to her father's bed. "Wake up, father," she cried. "The Christ Child is without asking to be let in!"

Her father leaped from his bed and opened the door.

He lifted the silent form and carried it to the fire, where the mother was already piling the fagots. They chafed the cold hands that still held the baby closely. At last the mother opened her eyes, and at that moment the little baby laughed.

"I saw the blessed candle—and it led me," said the mother, faintly. "It has saved me and my baby too."

Louise looked on in wonder—a great sadness in her heart. Had not the Christ Child come, after all?

Her father read that look and said gently: "Be glad, my Louise. We have indeed entertained the Holy Child this night. Did not our dear Lord say, 'He who receives one of these little ones in my name receiveth me'?"

RECREATION CORNER.

ENIGMA XXVIII.

I am composed of 13 letters.
My 7, 4, 2, is another name for boy.
My 6, 8, 1, is a beverage.
My 4, 11, 11, 8, 13, is a fruit.
My 11, 4, 11, 9, 5, is what we write on.
My 11, 13, 10, is what we write with.
My 12, 11, 9, 10, is what we do to Christmas presents.
My 3, 12, 6, 8, is what we strive to get the ball through in hockey.
My whole is a well-known American author.

RUTH FURLONG.

ENIGMA XXIX.

I am composed of 25 letters.
My 1, 24, 9, 4, 12, is a fruit.
My 16, 14, 23, 5, is at the top of a building.
My 7, 22, 11, 2, is a musical term.
My 19, 18, 15, 25, is a wild animal.
My 13, 6, 3, 20, is a point to be reached.
My 17, 12, 8, 7, is an adverb.
My 21, 10, 18, 1, is a journey.
My whole is a Christmas message.

J. W.

ON OUR CHRISTMAS TREE.

1. After getting the matches Kate stole softly away.
 2. The boys led the old horse to the brook each morning.
 3. Mother ran to the door and called, "Ollie, you've forgotten the letter!"
 4. I think we can dye that scarf dark blue.
 5. Papa intended us to be back before dark.
 6. When Robbie cried "Boo!" Kate jumped about a foot.
 7. Mary made us delicious muffins for breakfast.
 8. We met the hermit tens of times in the pine woods that summer.
 9. It was weeks before the scar faded away.
 10. Mildred rummaged in the attic for an hour.
- Exchange.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. II.

ENIGMA XXIV.—Francis Robert Greene.

ENIGMA XXV.—The path of duty is the way to glory.

CHARACTERISTIC INITIALS.—1. Florence Nightingale. 2. Edward Everett. 3. Ralph Waldo Emerson. 4. William Shakespeare. 5. Walter Scott. 6. William Tecumseh Sherman. 7. Henry M. Stanley. 8. William Makepeace Thackeray. 9. Washington Irving. 10. Mark Twain.

CONCEALED BIRDS.—1. Raven. 2. Heron. 3. Hawk. 4. Finch. 5. Phoebe. 6. Owl. 7. Wren. 8. Thrush. 9. Crane. 10. Gull.

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REV. FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR

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